

Message

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Subject: EPA: Wheeler bumps more academics from advisory panel -- Thursday, October 11, 2018 -- www.eenews.net

<https://www.eenews.net/greenwire/2018/10/11/stories/1060102327>

Wheeler bumps more academics from advisory panel

Sean Reilly, E&E News reporter

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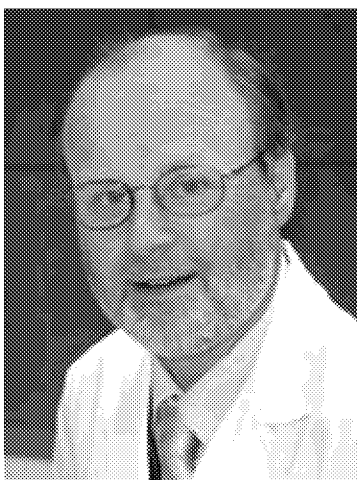
EPA



EPA headquarters in Washington. EPA/Flickr

EPA acting chief Andrew Wheeler yesterday dramatically reshuffled the lineup of a key air quality advisory panel with what he called "highly qualified" new appointees drawn mainly from state and local regulatory agencies.

But in naming five new members to the seven-member Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee, Wheeler also displaced several academic researchers, prompting accusations that he's trying to influence the outcome of a closely watched review of EPA's air quality standards for particulate matter.



Mark Frampton. University of Rochester Medical Center

"You don't have the expertise, period," said Chris Zarba, who headed the EPA office that oversaw the committee's work before retiring early this year. Zarba is now part of a network made up largely of former agency employees opposed to the Trump administration's environmental policies.

The committee, usually referred to by its acronym, CASAC, is charged with advising EPA during legally required reviews of the standards for particulate matter, ozone and four other common pollutants targeted by the Clean Air Act. With the appointments announced late yesterday, all seven members have been named by either Wheeler or Scott Pruitt, his predecessor as EPA chief.

The new appointees, culled from the ranks of three dozen nominees:

- Mark Frampton, professor emeritus in medicine, University of Rochester Medical Center's Pulmonary and Critical Care division.
- Sabine Lange, section manager, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality's toxicology division.
- Tim Lewis, supervisory research ecologist, Army Corps of Engineers.
- Corey Masuca, principal air pollution control engineer, Jefferson County (Ala.) Department of Health.
- Steven Packham, inhalation toxicologist, Utah Department of Environmental Quality.

Four of the five are replacements for members whose terms expired last month; a fifth takes the place of Larry Wolk, another Pruitt appointee who has since left his post as executive director of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment for a job in the private sector. The committee's chairman remains Tony Cox, a Colorado consultant named to the post last year whose clients have included industry groups like the American Petroleum Institute.

In the [news release](#) announcing the appointments, EPA said the committee "will serve as the body to review key scientific assessments for the ozone and particulate matter" standards. Under a fast-track schedule set earlier this year, both those reviews are set for completion in late 2020.



Tony Cox. Cox/LinkedIn

Among administration critics, the release's wording prompted speculation that EPA is disbanding a separate 24-member panel, made up almost entirely of academic researchers, that is charged with providing additional expertise during the assessment of the particulate matter standards.

As of this morning, however, several panel members said they had not gotten any official notification of such a development, and the list of panel members remained posted on EPA's website. Asked whether the agency is in fact abolishing the panel, EPA spokesman John Konkus in an email repeated the language in the news release.

The new appointments appear to reflect the impact of a Pruitt directive imposed last fall to guide the selection of members for CASAC and other EPA advisory committees.

That directive set a loose goal of expanding the ranks of members who come from state, local and tribal governments. More controversially, it also barred current EPA grant recipients from serving on agency advisory committees. Pruitt also effectively ended a tradition of reappointing first-term CASAC members to a second three-year term. Three of the academic scientists who were not reappointed fell into that category. One of them, Lianne Sheppard, a biostatistics professor at the University of Washington, is a plaintiff in one of three pending lawsuits that challenge the ban on service by grant recipients.

The appointments could also show the influence of EPA deputy air chief Clint Woods. Before going to work for EPA last year, Woods headed the Association of Air Pollution Control Agencies, which mainly represents regulators from the South and West. Lange, Masuca and Packham all work for agencies that are association members.

Asked in an email this morning whether he had weighed in during the selection process, Woods referred the question to Konkus.

"EPA went through the standard vetting process for interested applicants that included input from a range of offices at multiple levels," Konkus wrote.

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